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Governance and Sustainable Peace in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper examined the role of governance in the achievement of sustainable peace in Nigeria. It is obvious that insecurity is the order of the day in Nigeria presently. This is not surprising because of the apparent failure on the part of political leadership that has been amassing the Nation's wealth neglecting the masses. The end result of this ugly state of affairs is the widening gap between the rich and the poor. The political leadership instead of thinking out of the box to ensure the bridging of the gap between the rich and the poor by seeking ways of diversifying the economy to open up opportunities for job creation seems contented with the status quo. The political leadership seems to be enjoying the state of inequality in the country because it provides them ample opportunity to have the poor manipulated by giving them stipend to get their votes during elections. This high level of inequality and the exploitation inherent in it has made the poor masses to be disillusioned and disenchanted. The resultant effect of this is the springing up of terrorist groups like Boko Haram, armed robbery, kidnapping, separatist agitators like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta. While some of these groups appear to carry

out destructive acts against the state and the citizens as a way of venting their anger, others perpetrate dangerous act in order to survive the harsh economic condition foisted on them by the political leadership. All these actions have combined to bring the Nigerian economy to its knees. In order to guide against this ugly scenario, it is recommended in this paper that there should be effort to enthrone good governance that would ensure proper and prudent management of the economy as well as respect the principles of rule of law.

Key words: Governance, Peace, Development, Economy, Rule of Law, Security

Introduction

The high level of insecurity occasioned by armed robbery, kidnapping, the agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra, militancy in the Niger-Delta, the menace of Fulani's herdsman and Boko Haram terrorists activities necessitated the need more than ever before to interrogate the concept of governance. This is because it is believed that governance has a role to play in ensuring security and sustainable peace in Nigeria and elsewhere. It is against this backdrop that Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended regards security and welfare of the citizens as job number one of government.

It is expected that the President as well as all elected and appointed government officials should conduct the business of government in such a way that can bring about security and welfare of the Citizenry. The nature and pattern of governance to a very large extent would determine the existence of peace or otherwise. It is apt to state that good governance promotes peace while bad governance generates high level of insecurity and crisis. In the words of Aja (2007), "sustainable peace includes good governance" (p. 2). According to the University for Peace, cited in Ibeanu (2006) "Peace is a political condition that makes justice possible" (p. 8). These assertions show that a correlation exists between governance and peace. When the business of government is conducted in such a way that the citizens are not only carried along but also allowed to actively participate, it makes them to have sense of belonging and satisfaction. This is because as they participate in governance they would ensure that their interests are well taken care of and protected.

According to Ibeanu (2006),

to create peace, politics must be mediated by stable structures and secular culture. By the latter is meant that citizens become more participant and political values like tolerance, bargaining and negotiation are made the norm. Citizens also become more rational and evaluative when dealing with political issues (p. 8).

When stable structures are created, citizens can easily and effectively participate in politics and by extension governance. When this situation prevails in a society, one can comfortably and conveniently say that society has developed politically. Considering the preceding assertion, NISER was of the view that Nigeria has not developed politically. NISER (2001, p. 154) stated that “in four decades of political independence, the political system has largely been unable to increase its various capabilities to solve such critical problems as people’s willingness to accept and, therefore, legitimize a democratic order of rule or governance over them, political stability, regulation and integration of society, extraction and equitable distribution of resources within the polity, the need to increase popular participation in the political process and, hence, the stakes of the people in governance, and the need, therefore, to get the citizens to define their political identity in terms of the nation rather than, or in addition, to their ethnic nationalities, and regularization of the country’s membership of the comity of nations and (international) relations thereof”. Lack of political development in Nigeria partly explains why there is high level of insecurity in the country.

Conceptual Clarification

It is very imperative and germane at this juncture to attempt a clarification and explanation of major concepts in this paper. The concepts are “Governance” and “Peace”. The centrality of governance in the affairs of men has made it to occupy a pride of place in academic as well as political discourse within a nation and at international level. This explains why national and international organisations have taken serious interest in the concept. According to Egugbo (2015),

the concept of governance has been in existence from time immemorial. As the society progresses, more and more emphasis is being laid on governance to ensure the upliftment of the society and people. This becomes inevitable because the progress in the society brings with it more and more complexities in the relationship that exists among people. These complexities if not properly managed would bring about monumental disaster and crisis (p. 155).

The above assertion shows that the importance of governance in the affairs of men particular in relation to peace cannot be overemphasized. What then is governance?

The World Bank (1992) defined governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. Boeninger, cited in Afeikhena (2004, p. 206) defined governance as good government of society, with a capacity for efficient problem-solving and conflict. In the words of Egugbo (2015),

this definition is restrictive in the sense that it sees governance from only the positive side as if there is no negative connotation to the concept of governance. We can see governance as a responsibility placed on certain individuals or groups in any given organised setting to harness and manage both human and material resources to the benefit of all. Unfortunately, some people who have the responsibility of governance, place their individual interest over and above the collective interests. When this is the case, we experience bad governance (p. 155).

From the foregoing, it means we have two dimensions of governance and they are good and bad governance. Peace can be derived in any society when there is good governance and reverse would be the case when there is bad governance. According to Diamond (2004), there are several dimensions to good governance which include:

- the capacity of the state to function in the service of the public good;
- commitment to the public good;
- transparency, the openness of state business and conduct to the scrutiny of other state actors and of the public;
- rule of law;
- mechanism of participation and dialogue that enable the public to provide input to the policy process, to correct mistakes in policy design and implementation, and to promote social inclusion.
- it also breeds social capital, in the form of networks and associations that draw people together in relations of trust, reciprocity, and voluntary cooperation for common ends (p. 222)

From the foregoing, there is no gainsaying the fact that good governance not only bring about peace but also development. This is because it is a government that gives the people satisfaction and therefore, they would have little or no reason to act in such a way that could threaten the peace of the society.

Having examined good governance, what does bad governance entail? Bad governance exists when there is failure of government officials to appropriately and effectively harness and manage both human and material resources for common good. It manifests in such a way that those in positions of authority instead of pursuing and achieving the good of all concentrates on the pursuit of personal interest. When the people are neglected in the process of governance they find themselves in a situation where they decide to take their destinies in their hands and the end result would be the Hobbesian state of nature where life is solitary, nasty, brutish, poor and short. This situation is not favourable to both the ruler and the ruled. This explains why Nelson Mandela asserted that

as long as poverty, injustice and gross inequality persist in our world, none of us can truly rest. It is a world of great promise and hope. It is a world of despair, disease and hunger. Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity; it is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life, while poverty persists, there is no true freedom.

This shows that bad governance creates an unconducive and crisis ridden environment to all and sundry and under this condition achievement of peace is a distant dream. It is in line with this that Akpan (2008) asserted that: “bad governance triggers conflict drivers in the society such as communal tension, social division, militarization, elite’s fragmentation and competition and the emergence of ethnic and sectarian militias” (p. 23). This scenario vividly captures the situation in Nigeria where you have all kinds of violent groups causing high level of insecurity in the country. Kidnapping has spread to virtually all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, same with the menace of Fulani Herdsmen, virtually all parts of the country have witnessed and experienced the wanton killings by the marauding Fulani Herdsmen, we have the resurgence of militancy in the Niger Delta where oil installations have been destroyed as well as the separatist agitations by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Having considered and examined the concept of governance and its dimensions, what then is Peace? Peace can be considered to be a conducive and favourable condition that enables man to exhibit his potential for a meaningful and existence in the society. According to Francis (2006), “Peace is generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and about peaceful coexistence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means” (p. 17). Francis went further to say that in general, six meanings of peace are agreed on by many peace researchers including; Peace as the absence of war (absence of direct violence); Peace as justice and development (absence of structural violence); Peace as respect and tolerance between people; Peace as Gaia (balance in and with the ecosphere); Inner Peace (spiritual peace) and; Peace as “wholeness and making whole”.

Galtung, cited in Francis (2006, p. 18) outlines two dimensions of peace: ‘negative peace’ i.e. the absence of direct violence, war, fear and conflict at individual, national, regional and international levels, and ‘positive peace’ i.e. the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice and inner peace at individual level. The way the society is governed to a very large extent determines the nature and pattern of peace in that society. A condition of negative peace as identified by Galtung is not sustainable and desirable for man because there are tendencies inherent in that condition that can trigger serious threat of peace. But positive peace is a sustainable and desirable condition that is favourable and conducive for man to be able to operate and live a meaningful life. This type of peace can only be derived when there is good governance.

Encarta, cited in Adebayo (2007, p. 1) gave the following important meanings of peace, these are:

- a. Freedom from war
- b. The end state of war
- c. Tranquility; a calm quiet state free from disturbance
- d. A state of mental calm, serenity, devoid of anxiety
- e. A state of harmony, free from conflict or disagreement
- f. A treaty agreeing to end an hostility

- g. Law and order; a state devoid of violence, crime and other forms of disturbance.

To Aja (2006), “peace is a relative condition of security friendly climate that allows individuals and group relations to progressive order and stability” (p.1). Aja went further to say that “peace is the human desired condition and order of existence that allows the ruler and the ruled fulfil life obligations with minimum fear or danger on life, liberty and property. According to Aja (2006, p. 2), sustainable peace includes;

- a. Good governance
- b. Good followership
- c. Non-violent value system
- d. Preservation of human rights, including the prime sacredness of life and liberty
- e. Fear of sovereign creator and respect for man
- f. Security measures to guarantee the absence of fear or threat to the subjects and core values of a society
- g. Mutual commitment between actor in support of free flow of communication (dialogue) as the supreme strategy of conflict transformation and conflict resolution
- h. Sensitiveness to the early conflict signals and a pragmatic response to forestall their graduation into conflict scenario (proper)
- i. Religious tolerance that guarantees to each the “natural” liberty to any form of worships (in spiritual terms)
- j. Creating an institutional mechanism for the promotion of more collaborative activities than discord
- k. Introducing appropriate remedies timely, where applicable.

There is no gainsaying that fact that when all these points stated above are in place we have sustainable peace and sustainable peace is a precondition for development.

Challenges to Sustainable Peace in Nigeria

The high level of insecurity in Nigeria today has made it so imperative to interrogate the socio-economic and political condition in the country with a view to ascertaining the factors that cause insecurity in Nigeria with a bid to fashioning out a way out of the condition of insecurity in order to enthrone an atmosphere of sustainable peace in the country. The level of insecurity is so high to the extent that the American government cautioned its citizens not to travel to visit 20 states in Nigeria, citing armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism among others, as reasons for the advice. The factors that cause insecurity are x-rayed and stated below:

Lack of Transparency and Accountability

Those who occupy government positions have the mandate to do so in a democratic setting. And as such are expected to conduct the business of governance with utmost sense of sincerity, transparency and accountability. But in Nigeria, the only time the political class have regard for the masses is when they are soliciting for their votes during elections. As soon as they succeed at the polls and find themselves in government offices they start to operate as if the offices abinitio belong to them. They conduct the business of governance based on their whims and caprices without recourse to the input of those who voted for them.

Electoral Malpractices

One of the factors that spark violence and crisis in Nigeria is electoral malpractice. In Nigeria, politics is highly valued to the extent that it is played with disregard to the rules of the game. The Do or Die attitude of our politicians make them to want to win elections by all means and this manifests in election rigging. According to Dudley (1973, p. 14), “instability is the inevitable consequence of the failure of political actors to play the game of politics according to constitutive and regulative rules of the game”. People are bound to react violently when their wishes and will are subverted.

Lack of Respect for the Rule of Law

According to Alonge (2005), “the doctrine of rule of law is about the recognition of legal equality, impartiality and individual liberty” (p. 132). It ensures the enjoyment of human right and the prevention of arbitrary power. It

is an essential ingredient for attainment of an orderly society. Therefore, for the promotion of good life and harmony, the rule of law should be allowed to govern human society. The law is expected to guide the government and the governed and as such the actions and inactions of all and sundry should be in accordance with the law. When people's actions are governed by law there is high tendency of bringing about peace but the reverse would be the case when people act in disregard to the laws. A lawless society is crisis ridden. It is against this background that Egugbo (2014) opined that "there is no gainsaying the fact that a society not regulated by law is prone to confusion, crisis and possible collapse" (p. 23).

Marginalization of Some Ethnic Groups

Nigeria is a country that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious and as such it is expected that for peace to reign, the diversity should put into consideration in making appointments and distribution of resources. According to Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended "the composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from few states or from a few ethnic or sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies". The essence of this Constitutional provision is to ensure that no part of the country is marginalized in the conduct of government business in Nigeria. When this is done, there would be happiness and satisfaction by all and sundry and this would make them to maintain peace. The otherwise would be the case when the reverse is the case. The Buhari's administration has been accused of favouring the Northern part of the country in the appointments he has made so far. For example, about 90% of the head of military and paramilitary agencies are headed by Northerners, the newly constituted board of NNPC have majority of them Northerners. Some people have attributed the agitation of the Igbo's for the sovereign state of Biafra to lopsided appointment by the Buhari's administration.

High Level of Unemployment

International Labour Organization (ILO) described unemployment as "the population of persons aged 15-64 who during the reference period, were available for work, actively seeking for work, but were unable to find work". The level of unemployment is very high in Nigeria presently. The National

Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said the population of unemployed Nigerians increased by 518,000 to over 1.45million between December 2015 and March 31, 2016 (Daily Sun, May 25, 2016, p.15). The high level of unemployment in Nigeria has serious security implications because an idle mind is the devils' workshop. According to Rotimi cited in Tom (2014), "the increased rate of sectarian violence, crimes and terrorism are connected with unemployment" (p. 88). It is very difficult if not impossible to guarantee peace in an environment where you have very high unemployment rate. This is because according to Akwara etal cited in Tom (2014), "where the youths cannot get clean jobs, they make themselves available for odd jobs to stay alive which takes any imaginable criminal dimension" (p. 88).

Religious Intolerance

Nigeria is a country that is not only multi-ethnic but also multi-religious and as such there should be the freedom of worship that would ensure that people are allowed to freely decide and determine their religious groups as well as mode of worship. This explains why Section 39(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended guarantees every Nigerian; Muslims, Christians, idol worshippers, free thinkers' etc. freedom of expression, to hold opinions and to impart ideas and information without interference. When this provision of the Constitution is observed and respected, there is high tendency of achieving peace but peace cannot be guaranteed where people are forced to abandon their religious beliefs or having another religion imposed on them. Nigeria over the years has witnessed series of religious related crisis due to religious intolerance.

Mismanagement of Public Fund

Part of the reason why Nigeria is poor today is because of high rate of mismanagement of public fund. Most state managers in Nigeria today find it difficult to differentiate between personal and public fund and as a result they tend to appropriate public fund to themselves. This situation has partly resulted to a situation where most state governments in Nigeria are not able to pay workers' salaries as and when due. Workers in some states are being owed up to 4-6 months' salaries. There is no gainsaying the fact that these workers have become so impoverished. How can peace be guaranteed where people are poor, hungry and angry? According to Ifejika and Aliu (2015), "poverty instigates class struggle in the society, truncates government policies and efforts, creates

a sense of marginalization or deprivation, breeds social crimes and upheavals and makes development planning and implementation difficult” (p. 67).

Prospect for Sustainable Peace and Development in Nigeria

There is no gainsaying the fact that development cannot take place in an atmosphere of absence of peace. It is against this backdrop much emphasis is placed on peace in order for the country to achieve the needed development. The high level of insecurity in Nigeria today is so disturbing to the extent that all hand should be on deck to seek for ways of bringing about peace. This paper is of the view that if the factors below are put in place; they would provide high prospect for sustainable peace and development in Nigeria. The factors are as follows:

(a) Transparency and Accountability

These can be said to be essential ingredients of good governance which is a panacea for peace. Those in position of authority are there based on the mandate of the people and they are expected to conduct the business of government in a transparent way. With this, people would have a window of opportunity to make their input in the governance process and as such their wishes and aspirations would not only be taken seriously but effort would be made towards achieving them. According to Olowu (2002: 141),

public accountability is the requirement that those who hold public trust account for the use of that trust to citizens or their representatives. Public accountability underscores the superiority of the public will over private interests for those engaged in the provision and delivery of services to the general public (p. 141).

Olowu went further to say that “accountability is one of the five norms of good or better governance, the others being efficiency, transparency, predictability or rule of law, and legitimacy”. From the foregoing, it is obvious that transparency and accountability give room for the citizens not only to be aware of what goes on in government but also have the conducive atmosphere to make their contributions in the governance process. If this situation prevails, good governance would not only prevail in the society but sustainable peace would be achieved.

(b) Respect for the Rule of Law

According to Egugbo (2014), “the complex nature of man and its society makes it inevitable to have a framework that would serve as a guide to both the governed and the government and as well check their excesses. This framework can be considered the rule of law” (p. 23). The United Nations Security Council cited in Bjornlund (2014, p. 5) defined the rule of as when all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the state itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. If those in positions of authority and the governed act in consonance with the laws of the land; there is high tendency that peace would be the order of the day. This does not mean that some miscreants would not go against the law but when such happens they would be dealt with in accordance with the laws and this would serve as a deterrent to others.

(c) Free, Fair and Credible Elections

Free, fair, and credible election is a panacea for peace because the parties involved would be satisfied with the process in view of the fact that no one is cheated. Free, fair and credible election is achieved if the agencies involved in the conduct of the elections decide to be transparent, impartial and fair to all the parties involved. According to the Voter Education Handbook (2005, p. 41), four basic conditions are necessary to create an enabling environment for the holding of free and fair elections. These are:

- i. An honest, competent and non-partisan body to administer the election (usually referred to as the electoral commission);
- ii. The knowledge and willingness of the political community to accept basic rules and regulations governing the contest for power;
- iii. Developed system of political parties, traditions and teams of candidates presented to the electorate as alternative choices; and
- iv. An independent judiciary to interpret electoral laws and settle election disputes.

All and sundry have the responsibility of ensuring free, fair and credible elections and this can be achieved if the agencies to conduct the elections create conducive and level playing field for all the political players.

(d) Prudent Management of Resources

When resources are prudently managed, there is high tendency that those in government would make more positive impact on the lives of the people. This is because opportunity would be created where workers' salaries and pensions would be paid as and when due. Development projects would also be springing up. When people are gainfully employed and their salaries are paid as and when due it would reduce greatly the tendency of people to go into crime as well cause crisis.

(e) Diversification of the Economy

The country's overdependence on oil revenue has had adverse effect on the economy in such a way that it had made people as well as government to be lazy in terms of looking for and exploring other sources of revenue. The end result is that it has made the economy to contract with its attendant consequences manifesting in lack of jobs as well as revenue. It is on this note that Nigeria government should live up to expectation by ensuring the diversification of the economy in order to tap the resources for the country's development. When the economy is diversified a lot of jobs and revenue would be created to the benefit of all and sundry.

(f) Religious Tolerance

Nigeria is multi-ethnic and multi-religious country and as such people should be made to feel free to practice their religion without hindrance. Section 39(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended guarantees every Nigerian; Muslims, Christians, idol worshippers, free thinkers, even agnostics, freedom of expression, to hold opinions and to impart ideas and information without interference. There must be the respect for the provisions of our Constitution in all ramifications. A situation whereby some people take laws into their hands by attempting to force others to abandon their religious beliefs or impose their religion on others should not be tolerated and anybody found to be doing that should be sanctioned in accordance with the Law.

(g) Strict adherence to the principles of Federal Character in Appointments

Section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended advocates that "the composition of government of the federation or any of its agencies, and the

conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies”. If this provision of the Constitution is adhered to in making appointment at the federal, state and local governments levels there would not be any need for feeling of marginalization as well as agitations and protests arising from it.

Conclusion

Development cannot take place in an atmosphere of insecurity. Nigeria economy has now gone into recession occasioning hardship to the citizens. The gap between the rich and the poor has been widened because majority of those in positions of authority engaged themselves in amassing of public fund. Some of the poor who do not have legitimate means of livelihood engage in nefarious activities to be able to survive. The activities of this set of people have enthroned a situation of insecurity in the country. This situation is not favourable to any form of development; it scares away foreign investment and also kills local investment. This ugly trend portends grave danger to the country more as it is being witnessed presently. Attempt should be made to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. There should be the diversification of the economy to create more jobs for the teeming unemployed youths. The culture of impunity and disregard to the principles of rule of law should be stopped forthwith and the issue of marginalization should be taken seriously to ensure that no part of the country is seen to be marginalized, this would create a situation of sense of belonging to all and sundry and it would make everybody to have that sense of patriotism that would enable them see the need to contribute their quota towards National Development.

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